

Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal

State receives \$500,000 grant for legal aid hotline

Legal Services Corporation, the national nonprofit organization that supports legal services for the poor, has approved a \$500,000 grant for Mississippi to set up a statewide toll-free legal aid intake and referral hotline.

Lawyers, judges and other elected officials attending the first statewide Mississippi Access to Justice Summit in Jackson Friday heard the announcement from the organization's vice president, Mauricio Vivero.

The number is expected to be operational by 2004, and will be staffed by paralegals or others trained in some aspect of the law, he said.

Callers who qualify for Legal Services assistance - who meet the income qualification and whose problem is one that needs to be handled by a lawyer - will be referred to an attorney.

Civil legal service programs for the poor are due to be cut by almost \$1 million in January 2003 based on poverty population figures from the 2000 census.

The 2000 Census identified 548,079 low income Mississippians eligible for Legal Services assistance, compared to 631,029 in the 1990 census.